

**JAMI R. MORAN LBSW – GECEK KWE
SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIAN CITIZEN &
INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL DESCENDANT**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
FOR
THE TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION
ON INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL POLICIES ACT**

MAY 24, 2022

Aanii. Boozhoo. GeGek Kwe nindizhinkaaz. Nimkii nindodem. Bahweting nindoonjibaa. My English name is Jami Moran and I am a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. I reside in Brimley, Michigan about 12 miles west of Bahweting, the Gathering Place, which is more commonly known as Sault Ste. Marie. I was born and continue to reside upon land that is located within the ancestral Anishnaabe lands of the Ottawa and Ojibwe that was ceded on March 28, 1936 via the Treaty of Washington.

I author this narrative on behalf of my maternal grandmother, Grace Visnaw, and her family. None of whom I have ever met, but all who continue to exist within every core of my being.

Manidoo-Minjimendamowin - Blood Memories

I come forth today to share my personal manidoo-minjimendamowin, or blood memories, which have been passed indiscriminately for generations within my maternal family line. My truth is significantly similar to those shared by so many other survivors and descendants of Native American students who attended the various federal government funded Indian Boarding Schools across Michigan and throughout the nation. Parental requests for their children to return home that were denied, non-Native determinants of well-being applied to Native American families resulting in derogatory references, minor children running away from the Indian Boarding Schools, child industrial labor during Indian Boarding School attendance resulting in significant physical injuries with life-long impairments. Loss of culture, language and traditional

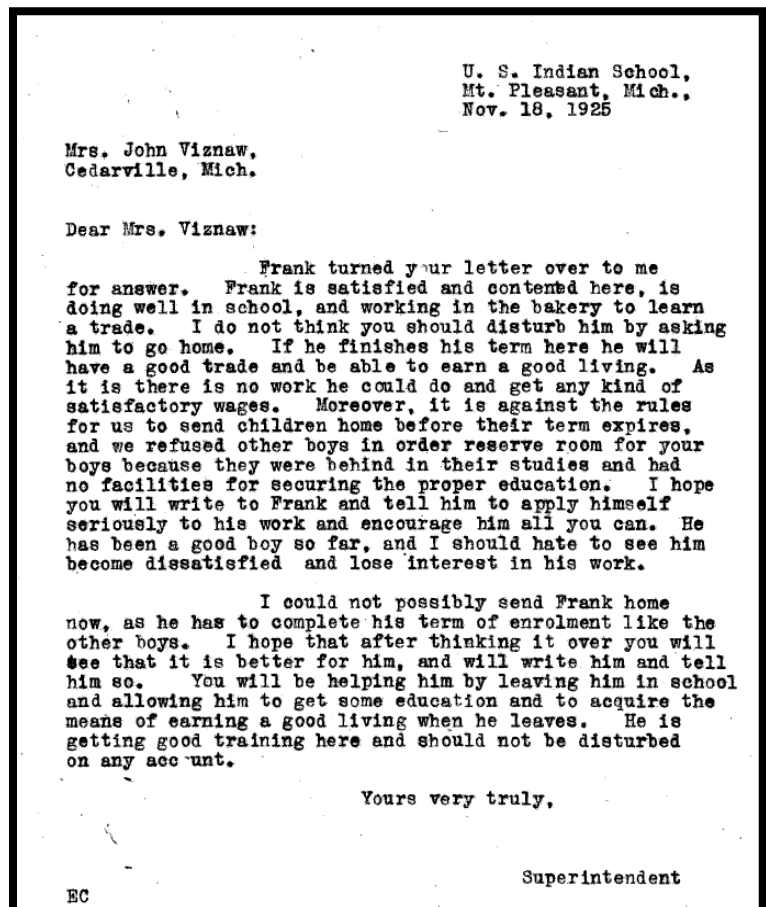
spirituality which was replaced through forced religion, loss of family and community connectedness, loss of maternal nurturing practices in exchange for strict military environments, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, mental illness, substance abuse and premature death. These are only a few of the multiple types of experiences and consequent outcomes that have been and continue to be encountered by Native American families who were subjected to the federal Indian Boarding School era designed specifically to “Kill the Indian, save the man.” Had I have had the opportunity to have met my grandmother, I cannot help but wonder if she would have refused to answer my questions, or worse yet, would she have answered my questions with those answers that I have feared my entire life.

Mt. Pleasant Indian School and Agency Student Case Files

The Mt. Pleasant Indian School and Agency Student Case Files, 1893-1946 (RG75) File 18/20 obtained from the National Archives at Chicago evidence correspondence between the Mt. Pleasant Indian School and Mrs. John B. Visnaw as early as October 27, 1924. A letter written on December 23, 1924 indicates three of Mrs. John B. Visnaw's children are students at the Mt. Pleasant Indian School.

On or about November 1925, Mrs. John B. Visnaw wrote a letter to the Mt. Pleasant Indian School requesting her children be returned home which was met with a declination letter seen on the right.

On December 28, 1925, my grandmother, Grace Stacy Visnaw,



was born in Cedarville, Michigan as the tenth of twelve children born to John Baptiste Visnaw and Mary Jane "Jennie" Bazinaw.

On November 19, 1931, documentation states "...that the Visnaw family was one of their greatest community problems." Mr. John B. Visnaw is described as "...shiftless, good-for-nothing. He has no pride and is looking for someone to take the responsibility of his children off of his hands." The document states Mr. Jean B. Visnaw "...would stand on the dock just like a beggar, telling his story and getting money by playing on people's sympathy." The document states when Mr. John B. Visnaw sought social welfare from the county that "...he was refused because he had been so uncooperative in taking small jobs which had been offered to him." Mr. John B. Visnaw was 68 years old in 1931 when the derogatory description above was written about him. He consequently died in 1939 at the age of 75.

Documentation describes minor child, Isabelle Visnaw, as "...not attractive as her nose is so broad and flat. Minor child, Grace Visnaw, is described as weighing only 29 ½ lbs. at the age of six. Minor child, Clarence Visnaw, is described as being a "...disciplinary problem..." and having a "...shifty expression..." Minor child, Lenore Visnaw, is described as "...the least attractive of the children." Documentation describes Mrs. John B. Visnaw as "...shiftless..." and coming from a "...poorly educated family."

During
1933,
documentation
evidences Clarence
Visnaw had an
amputation of his
left thumb and
index finger after
they were crushed
in the sprocket
chain of a potato
planter.

5-9654 INTERIOR DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS FIELD SERVICE		CLINICAL RECORD	
OBJECTIVE SYMPTOMS			
<small>Physical Examination.—General appearance, weight (normal and present), eyes, ears, nose, tongue, teeth, throat, lungs, heart, arteries, pulse, blood pressure, abdomen, intestines, liver, spleen, kidneys, skin, mucous membranes, bones, joints, muscles, glandular system, nervous system, genito-urinary system. Record abnormal findings only. Special sheets will be used for neuro-psychiatric patients, and for patients in whom the principal disability is disease of the lungs or teeth. Diagnosis by name and number will be recorded on this sheet.</small>			
Date		June 13, 1933	Hour
Distal phalanges of left thumb and left index finger crushed by being caught in sprocket chain of potato planter.			
Wound, crushing.			
3128.			
Operation: amputation under ether, distal phalanges of left thumb and left index finger.			
004			

PHYSICAL EX-
AMINATION (O)

Documents report Clarence Visnaw suffered a loss of privileges due to infractions of the Mt. Pleasant Indian School rules which includes having absconded on four occasions:

ADVISERS REPORT

To be submitted to Office when pupil is dropped or has suffered loss of privileges because of infraction of school rules.

Date _____

Name Clarence Visnaw

Age 12

Grade 3th.

Remarks:

Infraction of school rules, deprived of privileges.

" Abx four different times/" ✓

" Going to town with out permission." ✓
taking honey from the cider mill in town. ✓

"Stole articles from 10cents store." ✓

"Going in Miss Demuis's Garage." ✓

" Stole Gym shoes from Gym." ✓

(In each offence, deprived of privileges for one week.)

*July 21 - Broke into Vocals. Shop: broke padlock on tool cabinet: Stole tools. -
Went to weeding in garden.*

July 23 - Went to town without permission: went to Show: Stayed out until after 10 p.m.

Lewis Webster
Adviser.

On September 27, 1933, Lenore Visnaw is documented to now be attending the Mt. Pleasant Indian School.

On May 7, 1934, correspondence indicates Grace and Arnold Visnaw are to be sent to the St. Joseph's Orphanage and School in Assinins, Michigan.

On January 16, 1939, Clarence Visnaw dies at home at the age of 17 from pneumonia.

The 1940 U.S. Census for the St. Joseph Orphanage and School in Assinins, Michigan lists my grandmother, Grace Visnaw, and her younger brother, Arnold Visnaw, as an “INMATE”.

1940 United States Federal Census for Grace Vishow
Michigan > Baraga > Baraga > 7-3

Th ne	Home Value	Farm	Name	Relation	Code A	Sex	Race	Age	Marital Status	Attent School	Grade B	Code C	Birthplace	Code C	Citize	City	County	State	Pa
			SHSLAFIE, MADONNA	INMATE		F	EN	5	3	NO	0		MICHIGAN			R	ALGER	MICHIGAN	
			ROBERT R	INMATE		M	EN	6	3	NO	0		MICHIGAN			R	ALGER	MICHIGAN	
			SPRUE, ALBERT	INMATE		M	EN	3	3	NO	0		WISCONSIN						
			PATILIA	INMATE		F	EN	5	3	NO	0		MICHIGAN			R	BARAGA	MICHIGAN	
			ELIZABETH	INMATE		F	EN	1	3	NO	0		MICHIGAN						
			VISHOW GRACE	INMATE		F	EN	14	3	YES	4	4	MICHIGAN			SAMEHOUSE			
			ARNOLD	INMATE		M	EN	10	3	YES	5	5	MICHIGAN			SAMEHOUSE			

On September 20, 1943, Grace Visnaw gave birth to a son in Marquette, Michigan. This child was removed from Grace’s care and placed in a child caring institution in Lower Michigan. This child was consequently adopted by a non-Native family.

On December 23, 1946, Grace Visnaw gave birth to a daughter at an unknown location in St. Ignace, Michigan. This child was removed from Grace’s care and placed in the Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan. This child was adopted by a non-Native family of which an adoptive parent was a pedophile who regularly victimized the male Native American children who were placed into the home as foster children. This child born during 1946 is my mother.

On August 2, 1956, Mrs. John B. Visnaw died at the age of 65 from Carcinoma of the Colon. The death certificate states she was buried on Mackinac Island, but despite extensive inquiries and research, the location of her burial location remains unknown and unmarked. My maternal great grandmother remains missing.

On November 20, 1959, Grace Visnaw died at the age of 34 in the Newberry State Hospital of Coronary Thrombosis. The death certificate states she was buried on Mackinac Island, but despite extensive inquiries and research, the location of her burial location remains unknown and unmarked. My maternal grandmother remains missing.

On December 23, 1965, Lenore Visnaw died at the age of 41 from Coronary Thrombosis.

During 1996, after numerous conversations necessary to process my mother’s feelings of hurt, pain, betrayal and anger, my mother finally agreed to enroll as a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. My mother, having been born and adopted pre-ICWA, was not afforded any connection to her Tribe that is today a primary mandate of ICWA. My mother was

invisible and her Tribe did not know that she even existed. How many other Native American children adopted pre-ICWA are still invisible and missing? The Indian Boarding School era directly ties into the pre-ICWA child removal epidemic as the intent to destroy the existence of Native American people was one and the same. These pre-ICWA child removals, placements and adoptions must somehow be included in future Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Reports and included within any Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act reporting.

During 2010, my mother petitioned the Genesee County Court and was appointed a Confidential Intermediary to search for her older brother. My mother's older brother was reported to have died during 2005 and was described as homeless, mentally ill and suffering from addiction.

During 2012, my mother petitioned the Marquette County Court requesting a copy of her original birth certificate and copies of all child welfare and adoption related records. The petition was denied.

During 2019, my mother again petitioned the Marquette County Court requesting a copy of her original birth certificate and copies of all child welfare and adoption related records. Again, the petition was denied.

During 2019, my mother petitioned the Mackinac County Court and was granted Personal Representative of the decedent, Grace Visnaw. This Court Order was required in order to request the Newberry State Hospital Records for Grace Visnaw. Minimal records were received, but did indicate Grace Visnaw was receiving "shock" treatments. Did the shock treatments contribute to Grace Visnaw having died at the age of 34 while in the Newberry State Hospital? Another question that will never be answered.

I am currently 50 years old and continue to personally struggle with what the federal government has done to my Native American ancestors for generations. Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of my ancestors who were voiceless not so many years ago.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommend that continued investigation occur with reference to the former Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan having been determined to not meet the four criteria required for inclusion as an Indian Boarding School per the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report.

The “Encyclopedia of American Indian Issues Today”, authored by Russell M. Lawson in 2013 reports on page 223 that Native American children were moved from the St. Joseph Orphanage and School in Assinins, Michigan, which is included in the Investigative Report as an Indian Boarding School, to the Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan which is not included in the Investigative Report as an Indian Boarding School.

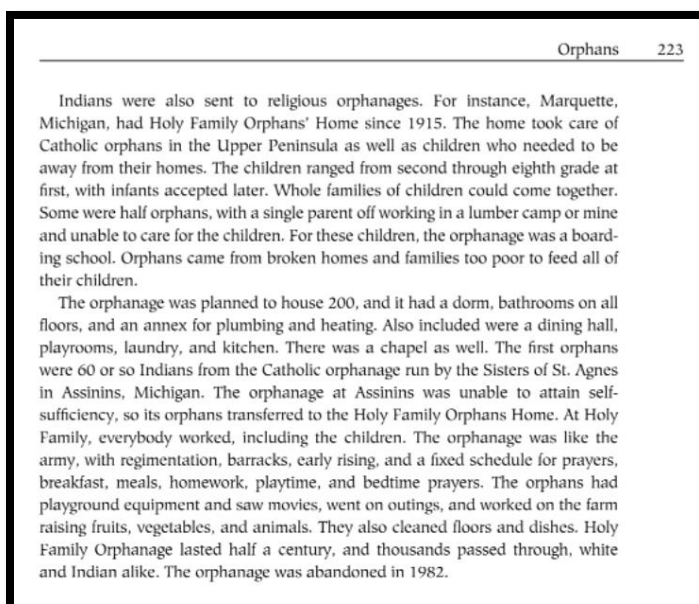
2. Gather, digitalize and allow free public online access of all records associated with the federal Indian Boarding School era.

3. Enact federal law that would supersede all state laws allowing pre-ICWA Native American adoptees free access to a copy of their original birth certificate and copies of all related Indian Boarding School and state / private child welfare records.

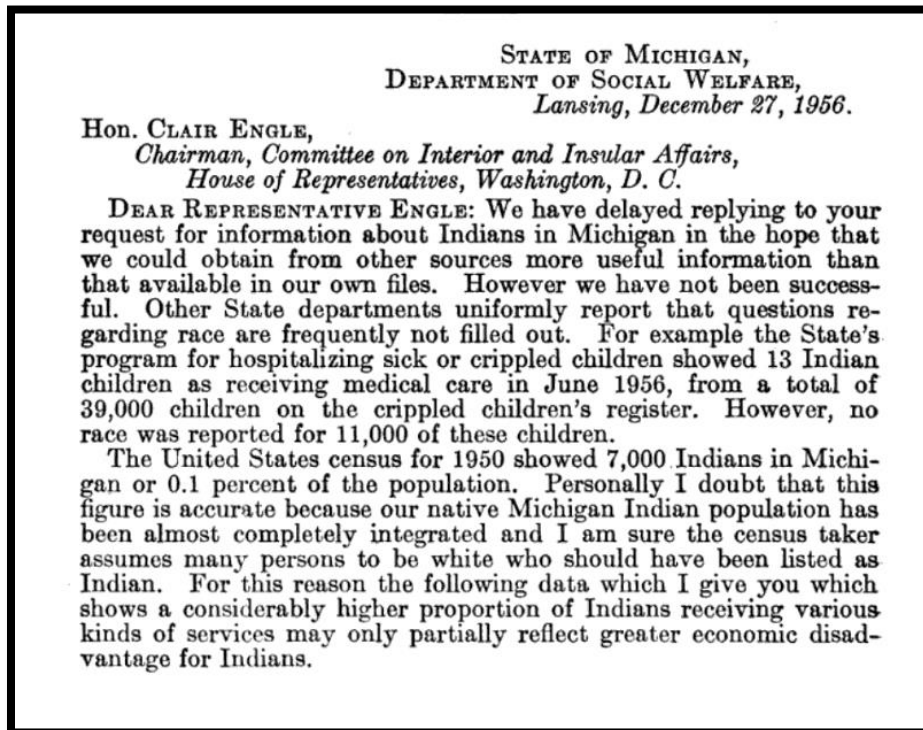
4. Conduct research to determine if federal funding earmarked specific to Native Americans was used to pay for boarding of children removed from their Native American family pre-Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

The Minutes of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs, 1956-1977, Volume 1, authored by James Robert Hillman in 1990 states as follows:

“The Honorable Wilfred J. Hupy, discussed the cost to his County for the boarding care of Indian children, he stated that at the present time his County is paying \$40.00 per month for five children or a cost of \$2,400.00 per year. These children are being cared for at the Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette. He stated that he believed since the State of Michigan in its agreement with the Federal Government providing for the care of Indians, which...”



A 1959 document, “Present Relations of the Federal Government to the American Indian – Committee Documents and Information relating to Employment and expenditures in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Claims Situation, State Expenditures for Indian Welfare and the History of the Welfare Activities on Each Reservation, Indian Voting, Tribal Assets and Liabilities, Attorney Services Available to Indian Tribes, Organizations Interested in Indian Affairs”, reports the following with regard to Michigan’s use of Indian Boarding Schools as child caring placements for Native American children.



Under aid to dependent children as of September 1956 as estimated from a sample study, there were 336 Indian children or approximately 0.7 percent of the entire child caseload. Under old age assistance on an estimate basis from a sample study, there was a like 0.7 percent of the load composed of Indians age 65 or over or an estimated total of 466 Indians receiving old age assistance in September 1956. The tiny sample—7 Indians—found to be receiving old age assistance is too small to be of much use to you.

In addition to public assistance all other public welfare services in Michigan are as available to Indians as to anyone else and I know of no special provisions to Indians as such.

Of the eighty-odd private child-caring agencies in the State, only one, Holy Childhood School at Petoskey, accepts only Indian children. A second institution at Baraga, which served only Indian children, was recently closed and the children whom it did serve are now cared for in family boarding homes or in Holy Family Orphanage under the supervision of the Catholic charities at Marquette. Most of the other agencies accept Indian children as they do other children—on the basis of their needs as children.

Statistical information about the children cared for by the public and private child-caring agencies, those known to the juvenile courts and those receiving aid to dependent children in their own homes or the homes of relatives, is routinely compiled by this Department, and this includes information about race.

The proportion of Indian children in the caseloads of the various agencies from which we collect information is given below. For the child-caring agencies and the juvenile division of the probate courts the figures are for the calendar year 1955. For aid to dependent children they are for September 1956.

The child caring agencies and institutions cared for 388 Indian children in 1955, which was 2.6 percent of the total number of children served by these agencies. This includes the private child caring and placing agencies, and the three State facilities, Boys Vocational School, Girls Training School and Michigan Children's Institute. (As you may know the two training schools are for delinquent children, while Michigan Children's Institute serves dependent and neglected children.) The proportion of Indian children was different for the various types of facilities: for the private agencies it was 1.8 percent of their entire caseload, for the 2 training schools it was 1.4 percent, and for the Michigan Children's Institute it was 12.2 percent. There are probably two reasons for the high proportion of Indian children in the Michigan Children's Institute caseload as compared with that of the private agencies—(1) there are very few private agencies north of the Muskegon-Bay line where most of the Indian population lives and so Michigan Children's Institute which serves the entire State, gets most of the Indian children who need care away from their own homes; and (2) it is difficult to find adoptive homes for Indian children and so they remain in agency care longer.

Of the children under supervision of the probate courts in 1955, 1.1 percent were Indian. In terms of the reason for referral to the court, 0.6 percent of all the children referred because of delinquency were Indian, and 2.2 percent of all those referred for reasons other than delinquency—which would be mostly for dependency or neglect.

We do have a problem in Michigan in respect to the Texans who come here each year to work in our fields. But this is not because they are Indians but because they do not speak English. As soon as they can learn the language so that they can obtain permanent employment in Michigan they quickly assimilate in our community life.

Sincerely,

BARRETT LYONS,
Administrative Assistant to the Director.
